

# STONE WALLS

SUMMER 1978



Weather. Nothing governs our lives and habits, our crops, even our stone walls, as much as the natural elements. Even in these modern times of submarines diving to the ocean's floor and rockets soaring to the moon, we cannot satisfactorily predict what tomorrow's weather will be, much less do anything to regulate it.

Everyone takes a turn at trying to outguess Mother Nature — skilled meteorologists, wise country sages, Uncle Zack's big toe — and the almanacs.

The *Old Farmer's Almanac* has a long and distinguished record as the foremost prognosticator in its field. According to Editor Judson Hale, the Almanac, which put out its 186th edition this year, is accurate 75-80 percent of the time.

I'm wary of such boasts. Equipped with Mom Nature's notorious February 6-7 blizzard, I examined six various popular almanacs. What did they say? The *Farmers'* and the *American Farm and Home Almanacs* (which share forecasts) predicted "Fair in New England" during the stormy period. They did expect heavy snowfall several days after the foul weather hit, however. *Blum's Farmer's and Planter's* said the same. The *City and Country American Elsewhen Almanac* was safe but not precise with its February outlook of heavy snowfalls throughout northern regions. The grand-daddy, *Old Farmer's Almanac*, fell flat on its face, misleading us with a prediction of "mostly sunny, mild" weather.

In fact, the only almanac which came even close was *Foulsham's Original Old Moore's 1978 Almanac*, which anticipated storms hitting the Maritimes and the northeast during February 4-7.

So much for the almanacs. It's fine to have institutions, but don't rely too heavily on them. To stretch a lesson out of all this, we on the *Stone Walls* editorial board hope that this publication might become a hilltown institution — one that *can* be counted on to provide lively entertainment, history and lore. Welcome to the 14th issue.

Bernard Drew

STONE WALLS

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*Wood cut by Walter Korzec*

# William Cullen Bryant

*by Gerard Chapman*

William Cullen Bryant, recognized as having been the first American poet of international stature, and the influential editor of the *New York Evening Post* for half a century during the formative years of the nation, was a product of hilltown Hampshire county.

His father, Dr. Peter Bryant (1767-1820), had come from North Bridgewater (now Brockton) in Plymouth county, to live as a boarder in the home of an early settler in Cummington, Squire Ebenezer Snell. Snell also had come from North Bridgewater, where Peter Bryant had known his daughter Sarah (1768-1847), and it seemed fore-ordained that they would marry.

During the years 1793 to 1807, Peter and Sarah Bryant had seven children — five sons and two daughters — and of them, William Cullen, was the second, born 3 November 1794. He was named for a Scottish physician. Except during absences for study elsewhere, Cullen (as they called him) lived in Cummington until 1815; and he returned there in 1865 to spend his summers in the cool uplands of Massachusetts until his death in 1878.

In danger of imprisonment for debt, Dr. Bryant spent two years as a ship's doctor at sea to recoup his fortunes, and when Squire Snell built a larger house, Sarah Bryant and her children accompanied her parents to their new home. That place is now known as the Bryant Homestead.

The Squire was a strict Calvinist who imparted his beliefs to his daughter, and she in turned reared Cullen in the orthodoxy of the community Congregational church. But in his travels and later as a member of the legislature in Boston, Dr. Bryant was exposed to the winds of change blowing in the outside world, and became a Unitarian. Also, the doctor amassed the largest private library in the area — some 700 volumes on many topics. Subjected to these cross-currents of belief, the independent-minded Cullen never joined the church, although frequently attending it without subscribing to its doctrines. He, himself, years later became a Unitarian.

A man at home in Latin and Greek, well read in the English classics, and a poet, Dr. Bryant fostered his son's interest in the arts, and by his astute criticisms, guided the boy toward a mastery of the art of poetry. When he was but eight or nine years old, Cullen published verses in the *Hampshire Gazette* at Northampton. And reflecting his father's Federalist views, Cullen at thirteen wrote an invective poem, "The Embargo", which was published as a pamphlet in Boston. Its censure of the policies of President Jefferson (the first Democratic-Republican to succeed the Federalists) was widely popular and brought acclaim to the boy. Except to scholars, these early verses of Cullen's are little known, but during his years at Cummington he wrote



several others, which are included in collections of his poems, and are well known.

Bryant's most famous poem, "Thanatopsis", is believed to have been written, in part, in the interval 1811-1813, while he was in Cummington, although, tucked away in a pigeonhole in his father's desk, it was not discovered until 1817. With a fragment of another poem, the lines were submitted by his father to a magazine in Boston. Its editors were incredulous, unable to believe at first that such exquisite verse could have been written by an American, and they mistakenly attributed it to the father. It was the editors, too, who coined the name of the poem, meaning "contemplation of death". The poem did not assume its final form until several years later.

Although much of Bryant's verse celebrated the joys of country life and the beauties of nature, the boy himself did not like the hard work of Squire Snell's farm. As a youth he was often sickly, and there is the story that Dr. Bryant, to strengthen his three-year-old son, subjected him to cold baths in a nearby spring, in accordance with the theory of hydropathy. The story that these cold immersions were to reduce the abnormal size of the boy's head, although often repeated, is doubtless apocryphal.

Cullen often had headaches and was acutely uncomfortable while working in the fields in the hot sun, where his physical abilities were often challenged by his strong and domineering grandfather. In an autobiographical sketch, Bryant later related how, "In raking hay, my grandfather put me before him, and, if I did not make speed enough to keep out of his way, the teeth of his rake touched my heels."

Cullen resented the Spartan discipline of the schoolhouse and the pious sermon-

izing of the minister, who came there twice a year to examine the pupils in their catechism and to hear their lessons.

But in those early years in Cummington, life was not all rigor and restriction for Cullen; he had happy relationships with both his parents. His mother was kind and solicitous, and his father fostered the boy's growing intellect with discussions of books and encouraged his poetical bent. The rural community had its recreations and pleasures: corn-husking followed by pumpkin pie and cider, apple-parings in preparation for cider-pressing, barn and house raisings, the boiling of maple sap to syrup and sugar.

Bryant summed up his early life in Cummington when he wrote: "I cannot say, as some do, that I found my boyhood the happiest part of my life. I had more frequent ailments than afterward, my hopes were more feverish and impatient, and my disappointments were more acute. The restraints on my liberty of action, although meant for my good, were irksome, and felt as fetters that galled my spirit and gave it pain."

In recognition of these facts, his family sent Cullen to the home of the Rev. Dr. Thomas Snell, his uncle, for study of Latin and other subjects, in preparation for college. He spent eight months in North Brookfield, in Worcester county, from November 1808 to July 1809, and his visiting father wrote to his mother that "Cullen makes surprising progress... he likewise makes great proficiency in drawing..."

After a short interval of farm work, Cullen went in August to the "bread and milk college" — so named because of its simple and economical fare — of the Rev. Moses Hallock in nearby Plainfield. Here he attained great proficiency in Greek (and his interest in it was such that in

later life he translated into English the "Iliad" and the "Odyssey" of Homer). Following intensive study at home of English literature and philosophy, and two months of mathematics under Mr. Hallock, Cullen was admitted to Williams College, at Williamstown in Berkshire county. Entering as a second-year student, he studied at Williams for eight months, from October 1810 to May 1811. An intimate friend there was Charles Sedgwick, of Stockbridge.

He resigned from Williams intending to transfer to Yale College, but lack of money prevented his going there. He had no desire to follow his father into medicine, and lacked the desire — and the training — to enter the ministry. So Cullen read law, going to Worthington, a few miles south of Cummington, where he resided and studied with Samuel Howe, a prominent lawyer and a friend of his father.

He spent two and a half years in that hamlet, from December of 1811 to June of 1814, and under Howe's tutelage found the law more interesting than he had supposed it to be. The house where Cullen lived and studied is still there, a large grey building shaded by trees; and in those far off days directly across the road was Noah Pearce's inn and tavern, a "cool, comfortable lounging place" where the young man could find respite from his studies among congenial companions.

In the summertime Worthington was a pleasant place amid its trees and fields, but in the long winters it was lonely and isolated. From Susan I. Lesley's privately-printed book, "Recollections of My Mother", comes a graphic description of the place:

Worthington is a mountain town, much higher above the Connecticut valley than the hills that immediately overlook it. It is approached by the

assent of long hills, over rough roads . . . There was no village more than a tavern, a store and half-a-dozen houses . . . In the midst of this Samuel Howe's house was situated; a large square house, with an ample yard open to the south. It was much the best house in the place . . . Opposite was the public house, where the Albany stage stopped each day, going up and returning on opposite days.

Mr. Howe usually had a student in his office (adjoining the house) who lived with them; and I think it was in the first year that William Cullen Bryant was with them in this position.

The winters were long and cold, the snow deep, and the roads made indiscriminately over fences and fields, wherever was the most available place . . . Dr. Bryant, their physician, and Mr. Howe's especial friend, the father of William Cullen Bryant, lived four miles distant at Cummington; he was a wise and learned man, and his society was at times a great resource to Mr. Howe, though he was very reserved to most persons.

His studies completed in Worthington, Cullen went next to Bridgewater to enter the law office of William Baylies, a prominent barrister who had been a member of Congress; from him, Cullen not only learned much about national affairs, but received so good an education in practical law as to be admitted to the Bar in August of 1815. It was during his sojourn there that he wrote his famous poem "To A Waterfowl", whose final lines,

He who, from zone to zone,  
Guides through the boundless sky thy  
certain flight,  
In the long way that I must tread alone,  
Will lead my steps aright,  
show that the young man, although

refusing to embrace formal religion, nevertheless entrusted his future to an all-prevailing force.

Now a qualified lawyer, Cullen opened an office in Plainfield, but in that hamlet of sparse population he had insufficient business to sustain him. Accordingly, when he was offered a partnership in Great Barrington, in the Housatonic valley, he forsook Plainfield — and Hampshire county — in October 1816, not to return, except as a visitor, until late in life when he spent his summers in Cummington.

In the intervening half-century, Bryant practiced law in Great Barrington, where he held public office, found his wife Frances Fairchild, had two daughters, established a reputation in the literary circles of Boston from the poems and prose he contributed to literary journals there, left the law to edit a literary magazine in New York, and became the famous and influential editor of the *New York Evening Post*. He became a wealthy man, indulged a love of travel, owned a town house and a country estate on Long Island.

In 1824 the death of his favorite sister inspired his beautiful poem "The Death of the Flowers" whose opening lines,

The melancholy days are come, the  
saddest of the year,

Of wailing winds and naked woods, and  
meadows brown and sere,  
are familiar to many. All his brothers but one, and a sister, moved to the prairies of Illinois, and in May of 1835 the remaining brother and their mother sold the farm in Cummington to join them.

Bryant's wife Frances was in delicate health through most of her life, and in 1865 he re-purchased the old family home and was in the process of restoring it so Frances could benefit from the cool upland climate, when she died. Now in his 70's, Bryant nevertheless came to Cummington

in the less rigorous seasons, retaining his city and country homes farther south for winter use.

He somewhat altered the house and restored as a study his father's office, and he spent much time on planting trees and overseeing the cultivation of berry bushes, consulting with his caretaker of many years, a man known as Squire Dawes. His daughter Mary (Mrs. C.F. Warner), in "My Recollections", tells of life at the Homestead when Bryant was in residence there.

Mr. Bryant always came to the farm in April and looked the place over and consulted with my father as to what should be done each year. . . . They talked over such things as the building or repairing of stone walls, the planting of more trees, and things like that. My father and Mr. Bryant planted during those years most of the trees now on the place. . . .

Mr. Bryant always arrived for the summer somewhere from the tenth to the fifteenth of July and stayed until the middle or the twentieth of September. He brought his servants. He always had four maids and coachman, and a span of horses, which he brought from New York. . . .

Some of his brothers were always there in the summer, but life was very simple.

We would be awakened in the morning by a series of thumps. Mr. Bryant was taking his "daily dozen" which consisted of a vaulting pole, dumb bells, and other parts of a gymnasium outfit . . . The Thumps, which shook the house, were caused by the use of his vaulting pole, he jumping back and forth over his bed with it. He would also pull himself up by the bar and "chin" himself. . . .

He breakfasted at seven, then made a



trip around the place, visited the orchard and inspected the place generally. While he owned the farm he set out about 1300 apple trees, nearly 200 pear trees, and perhaps a half-dozen cherry trees, also a few plum trees...He planted a great many berry bushes, blackberries and raspberries. On this after-breakfast walk he took a little basket which he filled with berries and some of whatever fruit was ripe.

At about nine o'clock he went to his study and from then until noon he worked, right through his summer vacation. He translated most of the Iliad and Odyssey in these hours.

At noon he stopped work for the day. Dinner was at one, and after dinner he and his brothers...went for a long walk, some ten to fifteen miles, over the hills, in the roads or across lots...They reached home between five and six. Supper was at seven, after which someone read the paper to him for a little while...The household went to bed early — by nine o'clock.

He was very vigorous. For instance, he never opened a gate. The house had a hedge...enclosing the lawn, and there were several gates in it. He never went through the gate. He would walk up to it, put his hand on it, and vault over. I have seen him at eighty years of age go over a four-foot gate.

He was a great lover of nature, and taught me all I know about the birds, trees, flowers, etc. He knew the songs of all the birds, as did his brother John, who was also a poet...

Mr. Bryant had a keen sense of humor, which he sometimes expressed by little impromptu poems which he would write and hand to the one concerned.

In the city, Bryant busied himself with

his literary endeavors, and when a subject particularly interested him, wrote an editorial for his paper. He was in great demand as a speaker, and his appearance at a protracted ceremony in Central Park one hot day resulted in a fainting spell at the entrance to a friend's home. He fell, striking his head on the stone, lingered for some days, and died on 12 June 1878 at the age of 84.



*Bryant Homestead*

*Photo by Bernard Drew*

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Today, a century after William Cullen Bryant's death, there still remain many things in and around Cummington to recall to us his sojourn here.

Most prominent, of course, is his Homestead, which was bequeathed by his granddaughter Minna Godwin Goddard to The Trustees of Reservations in 1928, with a further bequest of money by his daughter Julia Sands Bryant. Its furnishings reflect the varied interests and travels of its owner. The house is open to visitors on certain days during the summer. It was designated a National Historic Landmark in 1963 and bears a bronze plaque.

A little over a mile away, on Potash Hill Road directly opposite the Dawes Cemetery, stands a six-foot stone obelisk marking the site of Bryant's birthplace.



*Photo by Ellie Lazarus*

Not quite another mile down the hill, on Route 9, stands a stone building bearing a stone proclaiming it to be the "Cumington Library, Founded 1872 by Wm. C. Bryant".

Southwest of the Homestead, on nearby Trow Road, is the Bryant Cemetery, where relatives of the family, and others, are buried (although Mr. Bryant and his wife are buried in Roslyn on Long Island).

In Plainfield, four miles north of Cumington, are two places of interest. The Hallock Memorial School and the contiguous Shaw Memorial Library commemorate the "Bread and Milk College" which Bryant attended; and Dr. Samuel Shaw, husband of Cullen's favorite sister Sarah Snell Bryant. One-tenth mile away is the Shaw-Hudson House, former home of Dr. Shaw, who studied under Dr. Peter Bryant, and in it is a restoration of a typical doctor's office of the time, now containing Dr. Bryant's medical instruments and pharmacopoeia. It is open to the public by appointment.

Five miles south of the Homestead, at Worthington Corners, still stands the large home where Cullen read law under Samuel Howe. It is privately owned and not open to the public. Directly across the road, where the inn and tavern formerly stood, is the Frederick Huntington Sargeant Memorial Library, on the grounds of which is a stone bearing a plaque commemorating the night of 13 June 1825 when the Marquis de Lafayette stayed at the inn on his way from Albany to Boston, where he laid the cornerstone of the Bunker Hill Monument on 17 June 1825.

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# Let's Grow Blueberries

*by Nancy and Maurice Pease*

Most people believe that growing blueberries is just a matter of planting the bushes and watching the berries appear. This may work for a few bushes (?) but for 10,000 plants, this would be almost impossible.

For Maurice, "Moe", Pease, it all started in Blandford, Massachusetts. As a young teenager, Moe worked for the blueberry King, Joseph Kuzinecki, known as "Blueberry Joe". His employment with Joe lasted for some 20 years. By performing almost every job on the farm, Moe gained a thorough knowledge of the Art of Blueberry Culture. It was in this span of time, that he acquired 60 of his own bushes and grew them in his parents' backyard in Chester, Massachusetts. The 60 bushes soon became very large and yielded many pints of berries.

Moe married. He moved his wife, son, 60 blueberry bushes, and a nursery of 600 small blueberry plants to a farm he had purchased in Middlefield, Massachusetts. Clearing land each year, he would buy and plant two or three-year-old plants, until the number reached 10,000.

The operation of the farm is facilitated by the help of his wife and two sons. Mark, the oldest, packs the blueberries. Joe started with the picking, but now helps supervise the pickers, and Nancy, his wife, does some picking.

In a good year, 20 or 30 pickers are hired. Surprisingly, most of the time the people interested in picking will contact us. Over the years, Moe has discovered that young teenagers and older adults make the best pickers. Picking should be done after the dew on the berries is almost dry. The picking phases of "berrying" can be monotonous and tiring, but it is one of the best ways I know of to get a good suntan.

At 4 A.M. on a July morning you can see Moe and his boys loading the truck, getting ready to drive to the Springfield market. "Blueberries from Middlefield" brand has been seen in Boston, New York City, and Florida. Moe grows his berries for commercial purposes only and not for "pick your own". Growing blueberries is like growing almost any other fruit: it has its pitfalls. The weather tells most of the story. When there is a constant frigid wind, severe cold, and no snow cover, these conditions tend to reduce the amount of berries harvested in the summer, (i.e. the winter of 1976-77 destroyed the berry crop for the 1977 season). On the other hand, no wind, mild temperatures, and a large amount of snow cover, will probably increase the fruit buds that will survive in the spring. Another hazard can be a hard frost while the bushes are in blossom. Too much water or not enough water can be a danger. Blueberry bushes



can get certain diseases and are susceptible to some insects and animals. It is necessary to cultivate between the rows more than several times a season, to prune, fertilize, and mulch the plants. Rock picking, weeding, and making shipping flats are jobs that are always there to do.

Some of the rewards are: having your own berries, having your own honey, having something to do, and, most of all, meeting many very fine people. It is an asset to your business if you do have your own honey bees for pollination.

Moe had to build a place to pack the berries, a place for sanitary facilities, and a place to store the equipment.

To start all of this, some of the things you might need are about 10 acres of cleared land with acid soil, equipment, time, money, and a willingness to work hard for a small return.

At the present time, rows and rows of red stemmed bushes can be seen from the family home. As the days grow warm, the first buds develop, alerting the family to the busy season ahead.

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### *CLEAN-UP AFTER SHAY'S REBELLION 1786-1787*

*by C. Libardi*

Some of the last scattered remnants of Daniel Shay's rebellious recruits (mostly disgruntled Western Mass. farmers) were captured in the cellar of the original Bell residence on Sky Line Trail in Middlefield. Others were taken into custody. It is alledged, at the old stone corn-crib at the apex of Glendale Falls. Many more as far away as Pelham, by General Shephard's forces, out of Westfield. The Bell property (the Chester Nurseries presently owns about one half of it) was initially a direct Land Grant from King George III of England!

# Western Massachusetts

## Street Railway Line

*by Alice Britton*

WELCOME TO WESTFIELD  
WESTFIELD MERCHANTS ASSOCIATION

To all the People of the Westfield River Valley  
Greetings:

With the completion of the New Trolley Line from Westfield up the River Valley, opening up one of the most beautiful sections of Western Massachusetts, the Westfield Merchants Association extends a cordial invitation to all residents of the Westfield River Valley and all tributary towns to come to the Town of Westfield frequently and at your leisure visit the magnificent stores of the town along every line.

Come and inspect the complete and up-to-date stocks which in these recent years have made Westfield justly famous as a great trading center of Western Hampden.

The members of the Westfield Merchants Association are confident of their ability to serve you satisfactorily whatever your needs are with exceptionally well selected stock, large assortments, and low prices.

This is an invitation to come to Westfield to get better acquainted with the town, its advantages and its people and to familiarize yourself more fully with its stores and the fine trading opportunities these stores are constantly offering you.

Make our stores your headquarters whenever in town. You need not necessarily be a purchaser to be heartily welcome. Simply come in at any time. We shall be glad to see you.

Westfield Merchants Association  
H.S. Eaton, Pres.  
E.W. Reed, Sec.

Westfield Valley Echo September 16, 1905

Photographs: courtesy of the West Hampden Historical Society  
through Barbara Bush and Harold Maschin

There are many people here in our valley who can remember the Western Massachusetts Trolley Line that ran from Park Square, Westfield to Huntington. For those of you among us who do not know about this, I want to take you back to that time and tell you all about it.

Visualize, if you will, Route 20, in 1905: a narrow dirt road, heretofore used only by horses and buggies. A trip from Huntington to Westfield was an all day trip. Can you imagine when they proposed a trolley line? Where would they put it?

By 1900 the people here were ready to

get going; they were having to get to the different mills to work, they were ready to go socializing, they had horses and stage-coaches and the train, which was expensive and used mostly by the rich, so you can understand how everyone was sold on this new trolley line that offered a cheap way to get back and forth. You will see, as I explore this trolley line, what a marvelous toy was about to be placed here for their convenience.

The Western Massachusetts Street Railway Line, which connected with the Woronoco Line out of Westfield, was proposed by a committee of prominent business men of the area with Mr. R.D. Gillett as its president. This was a project of great magnitude, an engineering feat, as the road bed traversed a very rugged area; huge ledges had to be blasted at the

Cosby Corner in Woronoco and at Whipperton Hill, also the bad corner in Crescent Mills as well as the back side of the mountain along by the Huntington town line. At all times the levellest grade was maintained except on the hills, and the work was all done by horses, oxen, and wagons. A steam shovel was also used — it was the only heavy duty equipment available at that time. You will notice as you ride along Route 20 today the large stone retaining walls in Woronoco on the low road; in Crescent Mills and Huntington also they built huge cement walls — these were all placed there by the rail line to hold back the banks and they have withstood the rigors of time.

The Woronoco Line came from Springfield to Park Square, Westfield, and on up to Woronoco Race Track which was on







*Photographs: courtesy of the West Hampden  
Historical Society through Barbara Bush and  
Harold Maschin.*



Western Avenue opposite the present State College Grounds. There car barns were in a large building near Lowell Avenue. The Western Massachusetts Line commenced there and ran out Western Avenue and on out Bates Road. There are still places where you can see the old roadbed along Bates Road as it traveled along across a field and went down a steep grade behind the home of Leon Lafreniere, crossing Bates Road behind the Four Mile Country Store. It made its first stop at the Modegan Forest, or the Town Line, so-called Moyer's place now. It then traveled on to Woronoco, the tracks running behind the present Post Office which was the old Woronoco store. They used an adjacent grain store for a warehouse. In the village center was a pull-out just beyond the mill entrance and about in

front of where the Old Inn stood. The upcoming car would wait there for the car from Huntington to pass and each would then go on its way. The Line then went on to Russell, entering Old Westfield Road and on to its junction with Blandford Stage Road. This was the Rest Station and the home of Mr. Alfred Copeland who was the station agent. He used the big front room for the waiting room. It is now the home of Mrs. Marie Hague. There is one of the cement walls there placed by the line to form a bank. The line then crossed the Great Brook on an iron bridge behind the Mason's Hall, proceeded up Main Street and crossed over in front of the Catholic church which wasn't even there at the time.

At a place on the Huntington Road about where the old State Police Barracks used



to be, there was another passing track and a spur line that ran on down the hill by what is now Dick Oleksak's house to the River Bend Park, a picnic area that was developed by the company where people could come and picnic and enjoy the scenery. The main line traveled on to Crescent Mills and thence to Huntington where it stopped in front of the Federated Church. A freight house was maintained across and down the street from the from the present Gulf Station. To connect with the Lee Line one had only to walk behind the church to board the other car. The cars were equipped with a high arc light which the motorman had to take from the front to the back of the car for night driving.

The long run from Westfield to Huntington was made in 45 minutes, thus the time to Woronoco was 22½ minutes, just half way and a 10¢ fare. It was 34 minutes to Russell for 15¢, and 45 minutes to Huntington for 20¢ fare. Cars left Park Square every 30 minutes. In a special brochure it explained about all the connections that were available to travelers. They could take a stage to Blandford and Otis and the same from Huntington to Norwich Lake, Worthington, and Montgomery. It gave a flowery description of the beautiful scenic vistas at every turn up through the river valley, to entice city folks out into the country to enjoy the views and to come and take a day in the country where it was restful and healthful.

I have asked questions of many older people who remember the old trolleys, and the Line meant many things to many people. It was a way to get to work and was really used so; the old Hotel in Russell was a gathering place for Westfield people to come and eat and dance; children were transported to Woronoco to school; people even came from Springfield and Holyoke

to picnic in River Bend Park. The old Moore Hotel in Montgomery advertised, recommending the use of the trolley line with a change in Huntington to reach Montgomery. And so lots of folk flocked here to enjoy a day away from the city, a new experience for people formerly locked in with only a horse to carry them and only then on necessary trips. Now a pleasure trip was easily at their bidding.

The trolley line had an extensive freight business. It had a flat bed car which could carry almost anything. Stanley Everett who lived with Aunt Minnie Boyden on Huntington Road and Highland Avenue in Russell tells of an experience that took place at that time. Mr. Hiram Gridley bought a pre-fabricated house at the lumber yard in Westfield and had it shipped up here to Highland Avenue on the flat bed car. It seems the freight car was left off at the end of the street while the trolley went on to Huntington, the parts were taken off onto a wagon and the freight car then shoved back to Westfield to be reloaded until the house was completely delivered in this fashion. This was the first prefabricated house in Russell, the eventual home of Howard Thayer, now lived in by his grandson Carl Meissner.

Sand and gravel were also transported as well as many small boxes and packages. Herman Boyden tells about the trolleys in winter: they had a car similar to a box car, equipped with a plow which had a hole in the floor through which sand was trown onto the tracks. They used to let the bigger boys do the sanding. When we had a big storm with lots of snow the townspeople would get out their shovels and help clear the tracks. Dick Miller tells of Westfield people who worked at Strathmore who would walk from the mill to the town line and then travel home from there to save 5¢! Ann Walsh remembers travel-





ing to school in Woronoco since there were not enough pupils for two eighth grades, so they all went down there by trolley. Crescent Mills children were transported to Russell at one time also. Mrs. Abbey, formerly of Huntington, and now of Feeding Hills, tells of getting married in Becket and coming down to the Old Hotel in Russell for her wedding dinner and a stay overnight before going home to start married life. Sadie Mortimer worked in the office at the car barns until she came to the Westfield Paper Company in 1926. Many more stories could probably be told.

So, you see, it became a huge success and really performed a real service to the people of the Valley and Hill Towns in

those years from 1905 till its demise in 1926. I find in a 1926 Russell Town Report an article which tells of the town selectmen planning with the State's help to take the roadbed and replace it with a new state road from Westfield to Huntington which would be wide enough for two cars. They also planned to use the land in Russell behind the Redmen's Hall as an addition to Knox Park.

Herman Boyden remembers about the last car through the town. They got torpedos from the railroad and placed them on the tracks and they celebrated that last car with shouts and bangs just as they had the first in 1905.

#### References:

"Valley Echo" — newspaper formerly published in Westfield.

Russell Town Reports

Publicity material — a pamphlet of the Western Massachusetts Railway.

# A Stroll on Grass Hill

*by Virginia Ladd Otis*

Mid-way along Adams Road, Williamsburg...a connecting link between Depot Road and Mountain Street...rises Grass Hill, unusual in its baldness, its smoothly rounded expanse being quite free of trees. According to the History of Williamsburg, the place was under cultivation many years ago, crops of broom corn being raised here. Of later years, it has been used as an immense pasture for cows and horses, and the combined efforts of man and domestic animals have kept the area uncluttered by brush. Even the ground juniper, that scourge of pastures, has been systematically uprooted and burned, so that these open acres have an atmosphere similar to that of the rolling moors of England. In lieu of hedgerows, however, these acres are bisected horizontally by stone walls at top, bottom, and midsection.

To climb the hill on a clear day in spring or fall, or perchance on a windy day in summer is to savor an exhilarating sense of freedom; for on these heights wild grasses whisper to the clouds and brown birds sing their songs beneath the sun. Here one finds an atmosphere of tranquility far from the sounds of traffic, with an outlook over a peaceful countryside and the southern hills.

As we drive along Adams Road approaching Grass Hill, mourning doves complain and fly up before us; for they have been seeking some gourmet delight along the roadside. Small reddish-brown sparrow hawks perch on fence posts or wires along the way, the better to survey the surrounding area. In the lush field

between the road and lower wall of our hill, bob-o-links raise bubbling fountains of song as they rise above the grasses in the vicinity of their nests.

The hill is edged on the western slope by an old stage road bordered with stone walls and shadowed by hardwoods and pines, a road which continues on through the woods toward High Ridge. On the bald side-hill foxes dig their dens out of the earth, slanting them under the stone wall by way of protection; and occasionally we see the shy creatures running in the open. Many varieties of ground-hugging plants grow there, such plants as cinquefoil, holding out green hands to catch the sun, lance-leaved violets, strawberry, and dewberry. In June, the month of wild roses, the upper stretches of Grass Hill are scattered with prickly clumps bearing delicate pink blooms, while insects feed in the golden hearts of the flowers. Honey bees banquet there, butterflies, day moths, and skippers...those links between butterflies and moths, small, tawny, and fast of flight.

Beyond the topmost wall an old field is growing to brush, preparing to join the woods beyond; and here, in a wild tangle of shrub and juniper, the laurel grows to giant proportions. Field sparrows nest in the rough grass; and brown thrashers project their joyous arias among the laurel sprays and prickly hawthorne, where their nests are hidden. Ruffed grouse also nest in the wilder woodsy land above the summit; and early in summer a hiker may put to flight a dozen fledglings all skit-



*From a painting by Michael Rubin*

tering through the brush just out of reach, while the mother acts out her farce of pitiful wailing and dragging of wings. A denizen of this area and an enemy of the ground nesting birds is the black snake. Although this harmless fellow is actually shy and seldom seen, we may find his calling card wound about the ground cover, a shed skin nearly a yard long and transparently intact.

On the flat rocks of the topmost wall we sometimes spy pellets of hawks or owls; for these winged predators are wont to swallow whole rodents and other prey, later disgorging the indigestible parts in a compact mass of felted bone and hair. We always come equipped with field glasses, for we are likely to see hawks, whether they are enjoying the air currents over the windswept height, or quartering low on hunting forays over the open acres. With all these hunters about, on the ground and in the air, we often wonder how the mice and rabbits manage to

survive at all. If their death rate is high, so is their birth rate...thus nature compensates!

We have observed the nests of Cooper's hawks, as well as those of the broad wing and redtail; and though these hawks nervously blow their "police whistles" and fly about, they are not overly aggressive. The goshawk is a bird of a different feather! When a member of our family was hiking over Grass Hill in May (nesting season), he inadvertantly approached a tree bearing a goshawk's nest, whereupon he was continually dive-bombed so fiercely, he had to protect his face from the raking talons. There is a fascination in watching and learning to identify hawks. One foggy day in early May in Williamsburg we heard some whistled cries, and running outdoors, saw low over the house a flock of thirty broadwing hawks, tawny with white-striped tails, milling about in a ragged circle. The fog was just lifting, and evidently the migrating birds had



become confused and wandered out of their flyway. In early spring we have observed the large redtails putting on their aerobatics of courtship flights over the valley, tumbling through the air with a breathless rush, climbing high, and repeating the performance over and over. The loveliest hawk flights we ever saw were on Mt. Equinox, Vermont, on an exhilaratingly windy day. Dark and bold, they rose against the shining clouds in soaring flight, only to plunge slant-wise into the shadows of the hills down to tamer valleys, once again to rise on the wind,

bouyant, though tempest-tossed.

Occasionally over Grass Hill we see a vulture, or two or three together. Larger than any of the hawks, black as crows with disheveled wing feathers, they simply soar like gliders with never a wing beat, their wings held in a mild V shape, as they veer and tip a little drunkenly in the air currents.

Visiting Grass Hill, we may be tempted to linger after sunset; for here, with stars serene and ever close, tranquility abides when day is done.

### *CORN MEAL CRUMPETS*

One quart Indian meal; one quart boiled milk; four tablespoonfuls yeast; two tablespoonfuls white sugar; two heaping tablespoonfuls lard or butter, or half-half; one saltspoonful salt. Scald the meal with the boiling milk, and let it stand until luke warm. Then stir in the sugar, yeast, and salt, and leave it to rise five hours. Add the melted shortening, beat well, put in greased muffin-rings, set these near the fire for fifteen minutes, and bake. Half an hour in a quick oven ought to cook them. Never cut open a muffin or crumpet of any kind, least of all one made of Indian meal. Pass the knife lightly around it to pierce the crust, then break open with the fingers.

*Ransom's Family Receipt Book — 1888*

### *MILK PAINT*

For barns, any color. Mix water lime with skim milk to proper consistency to apply with brush, and it is ready for use. It will adhere well to wood, smooth or rough, to brick, mortar, or stone, where oil has not been used, and forms a very hard substance, as durable as the best oil paint. Any color may be had by using colors dissolved in whisky.

*Ransom's Family Receipt Book — 1888*



# The Language of Flowers

*The pretty red rose is an emblem of love;  
The snowball, thoughts of heaven above;  
The honeysuckle implies I dream of thee,  
And rosemary, always, remember me.*

*Arbor vitae denotes unchanging friendship;  
My only hope, the American cowslip;  
Declare your love, says the tulip tree,  
And juniper replies, I live for thee.*

*Gloxinia tells of love at first sight;  
Sweet pea says, meet me by moonlight;  
Dead leaves indicate a heavy heart;  
Variegated pink, forever we part.*

*Let us part friends, says the trumpet flower;  
Primrose answers, your friend for an hour.  
Plum bloom says, keep your word,  
And rose geranium, thou art preferred.*

*Apple blossom asks, wilt thou be mine?  
Peach bloom replies, my heart is thine.  
The dandelion is a gay coquette,  
And modesty dwells with the white violet.*

*Sweet William says, let our friendship end;  
Snowdrop sighs softly, I'm not a summer friend.  
Balloon vine proposes to kiss and make up;  
But ingratitude dwells in the bright buttercup.*

*I surmount difficulties, is the mistletoe's song;  
Woodbine's chorus, I have loved thee long.  
The lilac thrills with love's first emotion,  
And heliotrope implies only devotion.*

Drawing by Natalie Birrell



*Petunia says, your presence soothes me;  
Ice plant replies, your looks freeze me.  
White rose whispers, my heart is free,  
And white clover, ever think of me.*

*Sensitive rose, like a pretty coquette,  
Says, too young to leave my mother yet.  
Mine through sunshine, storm and snows,  
Is written all over the perpetual rose.*

*Blue iris brings a message for you;  
Forget-me-not denotes love tender and true.  
Blue violet is faithfulness, harebell, grief;  
And passion flower happy in religious belief.*

*Our souls are one, says the beautiful phlox;  
Constancy abides with the pretty dwarf box.  
Of love in a cottage portulaciac doth tell,  
And gratitude is found in Canterbury bell.*

*True friendship is found in Virginia stock;  
Ambition sits high in the bright hollyhock.  
Compassion attends the bleeding heart;  
And scarlet pea asks, must you depart?*

*Bonds is expressed by the blue morning-glory;  
Nobility of character by magnolia grandiflora.  
The amaranth denotes unfading love,  
And insincerity blights the pretty foxglove.*

*We find fascination always in fern;  
Sympathy in balm, and life in lucerne.  
Then gather a wreath from the garden bowers,  
And tell the wish of thy heart in garden flowers.*

- From an old magazine.







## Charles Kenneth Osgood

*An Appreciation - by Carl S. Joslyn*

This is the story of a man who loved his town and served it with complete dedication. His life is noteworthy because it exemplifies, in my opinion, a vanishing breed. We don't seem to be producing men like Ken Osgood any more.

Charles Kenneth Osgood ("Ken" or "Ozzie" to his friends) was born on his father's dairy farm in West Worthington August 31, 1912. He was the second of three sons. His life on the farm provided

good training for the responsibilities he was to assume in later years. At an early age he learned that he was expected to do his share of the chores: milking the cows, cleaning the stables, getting the hay in, feeding and watering the livestock, and so on. In other words, he learned to make himself useful and to pull his own weight. Another thing he learned was how to repair machinery used on the farm. His brother George says of him: "Ken was

mechanically-minded and keenly interested in machinery. He could start almost any balky gasoline engine." This mechanical ability was to serve him well later on when, as Chief of the Fire Department, he was responsible for the maintenance of several kinds of motors and pumps.

Another thing Ken acquired in those early years was a love of nature and wild life. The Osgood farm was located in one of the most beautiful valleys in Hampshire County. Alongside the River Road ran a clear stream that invited fishing and Ken, an ardent fisherman, spent many happy hours on its banks. He and his brothers liked to walk through the woods and fields looking for berries, wild flowers, and ferns. In these and many other ways Ken grew up to love the beauty of his town and wanted to see it preserved.

But it was Ken's religious faith that proved to be the strongest influence shaping his character. His faith was nurtured by the First Congregational Church of which he was a life-time member. He was a faithful attendant at its services and for many years served as deacon and trustee. Ken was not a part-time Christian; he practised his religion seven days a week and fifty-two weeks of the year. His religion taught him to love his neighbor as himself and that is what he did. He spent many hours of his time, after a hard day's work in Pittsfield, doing things for his neighbors that they were unable to do for themselves. I doubt if he ever received any money for his services. What he did receive was the satisfaction of knowing that he had been able to help a neighbor in time of trouble.

The first public office held by Ken, and the one in which he served the longest, was as Water Commissioner for the Worthington Fire District. He was elected to this office in 1941 and served continuously

until his death in 1977. This is one of the toughest, most demanding jobs in Worthington. Leaks in the water mains were not uncommon during Ken's term of service. Whenever this happened it was his responsibility, along with the other Commissioners, to locate the leak, to uncover it by digging, to repair the leak, and then to replace whatever earth or pavement had been excavated. This job wouldn't have been so bad if the Commissioners had felt free to hire someone else to do the digging. But it was a tradition in the Fire District (a tradition probably established by Ken himself) that the commissioners were to do their own digging and be paid for the same. Many a time I have seen Ken Osgood working away at this back-breaking, heart-straining job so that the rest of us could have water.

By the early 1960's Ken realized that repairs to the water mains, though necessary from time to time, were not the answer to the long-run problems of the Fire District. New sources of water were needed to take care of the steadily increasing demand. Also, new water mains were needed to replace the sixty-year old cast iron pipes which were badly rusted. Under Ken's leadership the following steps were taken to meet these problems:

- (1) In 1970 a Federal grant of \$45,000 was obtained from the Department of Housing and Urban Development.
- (2) This money was used to install a new well, to build a second storage reservoir, to put in a chlorinator facility, and to do some water main work.
- (3) In 1976 the Fire District, after consultation with the engineering firm of Tighe and Bond, applied to the Economic Development Administration for a grant of \$230,000. This grant was approved on January 6,



1977.

- (4) During the summer of 1977 this money was used to replace the remaining cast iron mains with 8-inch asbestos-cement mains. Extensive re-piping at the reservoirs was also undertaken to permit greater flexibility of operation.

What these measures meant, in the aggregate, was that people living in the Fire District were provided with a new system of water supply and transmission at no direct cost to themselves. The value of their property was certainly enhanced by these improvements. No one man could have done this job alone; Ken had the help of the other Water Commissioners, of professional consultants, and of the government agencies making the grants. But the burden of work involved in filing applications for grants, filling out the numerous forms required, setting up bank accounts, handling correspondence, and serving as Project Co-ordinator fell upon the shoulders of Ken Osgood. This is hard, time-consuming, and sometimes frustrating work. If there were such a thing as a medal for distinguished service to one's community, Ken would be an outstanding candidate for the award.

The second public service job held by Ken was as Chief of the Fire Department. He served in this office for twenty-one years. Ken took this responsibility, as he took all the others that came his way, with the utmost seriousness. To insure promptness in answering fire alarms, he used to have his daughters time the practice runs from his bed to the outside door. He was also instrumental, even before he became Chief, in getting the town its first piece of fire-fighting apparatus. This was a four-wheel drive Chevrolet truck, with a front mount centrifugal pump, which was being sold as army surplus.

It is still in use. Ken took care of this truck as a mother would take care of her child. I recall one occasion when the truck was in need of an overhaul and Ken spent the better part of a week, working nights at the fire house, getting it back in shape. He felt the job had to be done as soon as possible since, at that time, the Chevrolet truck was our mainstay in fighting fires.

Ken was ambitious for the Fire Department and wanted it to give the best possible service to the town. To this end he encouraged its members to speak freely about things they thought should be improved. When I was active in the Fire Department we used to hold, at the next meeting following a big fire, what I called a "post mortem". The purpose of this session was to find out what had been done right, what had been done wrong, and how our service could be improved. The discussion at these "post mortems" was merciless. No one was spared, least of all the Chief. But whatever may have been the provocation — and sometimes there was plenty — I never saw him lose his temper, raise his voice to anyone, or get sore when he was under fire. His religion taught him self-control and that is what he practised.

Ken was active in promoting co-operation and friendly competition with the fire departments in other towns. The co-operation took the form of membership in the Hilltown Mutual Aid Association. Under this arrangement each member town agreed to render assistance, when needed, in fighting fires in neighboring towns. Meetings were held in the several towns on a rotating basis. This provided the opportunity for the firemen in each town to get to know the firemen in neighboring towns and their fire-fighting equipment. I was sorry when, for lack of interest, the Hilltown Mutual Aid Associa-

tion was forced to disband.

Competition with the fire departments in other towns took the form of participation in the annual musters. Ken was keenly interested in these contests, most of which were held at the Cummington Fair Grounds. Worthington's forte was the portable pump contest which we won in 1957, 1959, 1960, and 1962. Winning the contest required not only speed, but the closest kind of co-ordination between the members of a six-man team. I always felt it was unfair when Ken Osgood, after leading his team to victory, was dunked by his team-mates in a tub of cold water. Such is the force of tradition!

From the Fire Department Ken went on to serve his town as Selectman for a total of twenty-two years. I was Town Moderator for a part of this time and can testify about his participation in town meetings. The easy course for Selectmen to follow at these meetings is to answer only those questions put to them by the voters. If no questions are asked, the motions are approved with a minimum of debate and there is no hassle. Ken Osgood would have none of this. No sooner was a motion on the floor than he was on his feet, asking for recognition, so that he could explain to the voters what the motion was all about and why the money requested was needed. I suppose there are some people who think that, for a Selectman to act this way, is to throw one's weight around. That is a silly notion. Ken simply felt that the voters were entitled to full information about what they were voting on and he made it his business to see that they got it.

Ken's record of public service soon won him recognition from the Selectmen in other towns. In 1967 he was elected president of the Hampshire County Selectmen's Association, and in 1973 president of the Massachusetts Selectmen's Association.

In both these organizations he was known for his advocacy of greater home rule and relief from the heavy burden of local taxes. More could be said about this phase of his life, but we shall have to restrict ourselves to Ken's services to the town of Worthington.

One of the last projects Ken put his hand to was the memorial park adjacent to the Fire House. This land was given to the town by the Albert family in memory of Jeff Albert and Malcolm Wronski who were killed in an accident near the site several years ago. Jeff's grandmother, Mrs. Stella Albert, was a co-sponsor of the project. She and Ken wanted the park to be a place of beauty, a sanctuary for wild life, and a recreation area for the young people of the town. During the past winter the area was flood-lighted so that it could be used for skating. Plans for the future development of the park were drawn up by the Conway School of Design and it was Ken's hope that some day they would be realized.

On January 1, 1977 Ken retired from his position at the General Electric Company after forty years of service. Shortly after his retirement a party in his honor was held at the Bluebonnet Diner in Northampton. This party was also a kind of "roast" during which Ken was the object of a lot of good-natured banter and kidding. One highlight of the occasion was a mock trial, staged by his daughter Joan Donovan, in which Ken was charged with "Ser-lov-to-com-go-fam" (Service with love to Community, God, and Family above and beyond the normal human capacity). He was found guilty and was sentenced to "spend his retirement in happiness and contentment, and no doubt more service".

This sentence was destined not to be carried out. Two months later, while



clearing snow from his driveway, Ken was struck down by a massive heart attack and died. So ended the life of a man who loved his town and served it with complete dedication.

All of us who knew Ken were shocked and grieved by his passing. We speak of his death as “untimely” and wish that he could have been spared to enjoy a well-earned retirement. But we must not lose sight of an important compensation: Ken was a functioning, productive person up to the moment of his death. An old age of chronic invalidism would never have suited him. I am sure he would have agreed with what a wise man\* once said about life: “To live is to function; that’s all there is to living”. If that is true, Ken lived life to the full, and continued living, acting, and serving until the moment of his death.

We can best honor the memory of this outstanding public servant by seeing to it that the things he stood for are perpetuated in the life of Worthington: by preserving the natural beauty of the town, by keeping alive the tradition of the good neighbor, and by asking not what the town can for us, but what we can do for the town.

Such a resolve would, I am sure, have Ken’s blessing.

\*The late Oliver Wendell Holmes, Jr., Associate Justice of the United States Supreme Court.



*A painting bee at the parsonage. Ken is on the ladder at the extreme right.*

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For the information they provided, I wish to thank the following persons: Mrs. Harriet Osgood, Mrs. Beverly Smith, George H. Osgood, and Gerald Bartlett.

# The Ash House

*by May Smith*



*Drawing by Tom and Kristen Jay*



About seventy-five feet from the back door of the old house stands an ash house. Surrounding it is a lovely field with some old apple trees still standing, and along the stone wall to the north are rugged oaks and ancient maples. Then, as the back drop, is the Mountain, Rock House. On the banks just south of it are grape vines and the old moss roses, which are said to be from those planted generations ago.

To me it is beautiful. The bricks are the lovely red, mellowed with the years. The door is weathered to a beautiful gray, and even the hinges are not ordinary. My aunt says much black-smithing was done on the farm, and feels that these were probably made on the premises.

It isn't known how old the building is, but to anyone's knowledge it may have been there as long, or almost as long, as any of the buildings. However, about fifty years ago a few minor repairs were made.

My aunt says visitors to her yard usually refer to it as such a nice little "smoke-house". In the spring there is a cluster of red tulips to bloom and as the season progresses there are butter-cups and daisies, and last fall I noticed a tall mullien plant by the corner. The cattle seem to "eat around" these, as if to leave them for added beauty. Sometimes I think outside buildings become storage space for odd things to be "tucked" into, so one day, out of curiosity, I cautiously peeked in the door — to find that its contents were ashes!

Right next to the little house is the leaching stone, with a circular groove chiseled into it, and the little groove from which to drain the lye into a container as it leached from the barrel in which had been placed ashes and water. Often I wish I could turn back time and see the ladies

working there — making soap, probably in a big iron kettle over a nearby fire.

But making soap was more than this. Day by day they had carefully saved and rendered all the fat from butchering time, and any drippings saved from roasting and frying the meats. This is a far cry from the present when we walk along the aisles in a supermarket with the numerous boxes of various powders and detergents facing us to choose from. Quite a few years ago, a friend of mine used to make soap from kitchen fats she accumulated. She went to the store and bought a can of lye to use. It was good soap, and I found it interesting when I tried it. I have recently read good articles of making soap at home, and I know there are many women doing it.

True, it's just a little old ash house, but it has had ashes put into it for many years, and ashes are something to think about, too. The heat from which they came served many a purpose and many a person: cooked the food, baked the bread, heated the water, gave warmth to the rooms that babies were born in, and lay in their cradles, and played, and grew up in. My mother was born in the big house on this farm ninety-seven years ago this February, and she always said she was told it was a bitterly cold day. She needed the warmth from the wood burning down to ashes.

I think, too, of the conversations around the old fireplaces, of happiness, and dreams of the future; of sorrow and someone keeping vigil by the sick and dying. And of course there were soggy boots, and wet coats and mittens that had to be dried by these fires to be ready to wear the next morning.

Just an old ash-house in a lovely rural setting.

# Transportation in the Twenties

*by Lucie Mollison*

When I came to Western Massachusetts in 1918, horses were plentiful, but cars were gaining in popularity.

In December 1918 when Harry Mollison came to Worthington to take over the Worthington to Williamsburg stage and mail route, he drove horses most of that winter to Williamsburg, then hired a car or traveled by trolley to Northampton to do his errands. At that time, roads were not opened for cars in the winter in the hill towns, and almost worse than snow was the mud in the spring, so most of the supplies for the stores in Worthington and Chesterfield were brought in by the stage.

Horses were used by many the year round, and a good driving horse was a possession to be proud of. The church horse sheds, now torn down, on Sundays and town meeting days would be filled with horses, and many women had their own driving horses which they drove to sewing bees, or to Huntington to get the train for Springfield.

Mud time was bad, and I have seen the stage labor from Williamsburg to Chesterfield — a two-seated wagon with passengers, mail, grain, and sundry articles — two heavy work horses pulling through the mud with the men passengers walking up the hills.



*Mail stage from Worthington to Williamsburg,  
1922 or 1923*



*Mail stage in summer 1921*

In 1919 a Reo truck was used for the summer months. Most people put their cars away after the first snowfall and depended on horses and the stage all winter.

If the winter was not too snowy, the truck could be left in Chesterfield and horses used from there to Worthington, but in bad weather the truck was left in Williamsburg. With seven or eight horses in the barn, their use was alternated, as it was a hard drive.

In winter the district nurse and the doctor were driven to their cases, day or night, and Lewis Zarr and Dan Porter took their turns at driving them and helping with the stage run.

Roads were opened in different ways. If the snow was not too bad, a large V-shaped plow was used; otherwise a land plow was fastened to the "front bob" of a two-horse sled. Some towns used huge snow rollers. All of these took two teams of horses to draw. Sleighs were common and were fun, even when the sleigh tipped over and dumped the passengers into the deep snow. At least the snow was clean, while the month of mud

season was dirty, slogging hard work for both men and horses.

In March of 1926 a demonstration was held, showing a truck or tractor plow that would clear the roads for automobiles. The next year the town used one on the main roads, gradually expanding the amount of roads cleared. Eventually roads were made with better drainage and better gravel and finally they were hardened to eliminate the mud, so now few horses are seen and cars go everywhere.



*Snow roller used to roll roads, Goshen 1918*



# How to Cook with Wood

*by Robin Lynes*

I learned to cook on a woodstove four years ago through force of circumstances. I hated it. But now I wouldn't go back to a gas or electric stove on a bet, for two reasons:

- (1) You can blame *all* your failures on a wood stove. Even if it means dinner at ten p.m.
- (2) It's the only way for me to keep warm in the winter.

There are other advantages, of course. Instead of four small burners, I have a surface of perhaps three feet by two to work on. And an oven that does eight loaves of bread at a time. Meat thaws quickly on the top shelf. We dry apple rings and jerky above the stove. I never have to clean the oven.

There are plenty of disadvantages, too. The heat that's so nice in the winter makes cooking unbearable in the summer. The stove smokes the house up if you're not careful. All our pots are black on the bottom. None of this would be so bad if our stove wasn't malicious. But it is. I have three broken toes to prove it. (From kicking the beast!)

If you need a hot fire, it smolders. When you want a cool oven, it's right up there at 500 degrees. I have never made granola without burning it. And you can't reason with the beast. It just doesn't listen.

But I've learned to adapt to my stove. I don't attempt souffles or anything deep-fat fried. I cover *everything* I put in the

oven with foil, so it doesn't burn. (Sometimes things burn, *no matter what*. Granola is one of them.)

So, you still want to learn the trick of cooking with wood? Well, I'm sorry to disappoint you. There isn't any special "trick", or "knack", to it. All it takes is sheer will-power. About six months and three nervous breakdowns later, you will probably understand your stove. You will never *master* it; but you might be able to get it to cooperate *some* of the time.

The first thing to do is find the drafts. We have three, but you may have anywhere from two to six. Open all of them. Crumple sheets of newspapers into balls and stuff them into the fire box (I need a whole section to start a fire). Lay dry (*dry!*) kindling on top of the paper, criss-cross fashion. Make about four layers of wood. Now light the paper, from the bottom if possible. As the kindling burns, gradually add larger pieces of wood, up to about the thickness of your wrist. Get the fire roaring!

Now comes the hard part. One of your drafts, when closed, will channel the hot air all around the oven and the top of the stove. Find which one it is and close it. Probably you'll have to adjust the other drafts to keep the stove from smoking. Experiment. You want as much air as possible to get to the fire, so that the oven will heat up. Once you've got the drafts adjusted, keep feeding the fire, every



fifteen minutes or so. Use a timer to be sure. It's easy to forget when you're used to gas or electricity.

When you're first learning, it's better to use a lot of little wood, instead of two or three big pieces. You have to check the fire more often, but the fire is hotter. And that's the trouble most of us have — keeping the stove hot enough to cook on.

Now for the actual cooking. Allow one to one and one-half hours for the stove to get up to temperature. The time will decrease as you get more proficient. At least two hours are required for a large pot of water to boil. Baking things in the oven takes varying amounts of time. If your stove is cooperative, you have no problems. If

it isn't, you'll have to stick to hamburgers and such, that can be done on top of the stove.

Cooking by time is difficult, too. Say you have to cook a fifteen pound turkey at twenty minutes to the pound. That's, let's see, five hours, at 325 degrees. Start it very early. If it's cooking too quickly, you can take it out for a couple of hours, and then just re-heat it. The easiest way to do any cooking is "until it's done". And remember, if you eat at 3:30 or 10:00 it's the *stove's* fault, not yours.

Come, come, you're not discouraged, are you? Think of all the electricity you save.



# Teaching in Cummington

*by Grace Wignot*

Some of the greatest pleasures, as one grows older, are memories. It is sometimes the most difficult experiences that become cherished or humorous thoughts to recall. My first year of teaching was in Cummington. I thought I would never survive that year. I did, and my memories of it are very rewarding and happy ones.

My first visit to the little town where I was to teach was exciting. It was nestled among the hills which I loved. The homes scattered here and there were plain country houses. To me they looked inviting and cozy. I wondered which ones would have children (living in them) that I would have in my grade. The Center School had four rooms. An experienced teacher had the first, second, and third grades. I was to have the fourth, fifth, and sixth grades. Miss Mason and Mr. Corving would teach the seventh and eighth grades.

The first problem to be solved was that of finding a place to board. It turned out to be no problem, however, for the superintendent recommended a place where the Junior High School teacher and I might live.

After getting settled in our new abode, we went to the school for a teachers' meeting. I can remember standing before the empty seats in my room and trying to picture just how it would be when the room was filled with children. Would I win their critical approval? Could I have looked in on the prospective pupils, I would have known that on the same day, they had sim-

ilar thoughts. New fall dresses were ready to be worn on that day. Some children would bring bouquets of fall flowers. Others would offer to erase the boards or clap the erasers after school. Of course there would be those who were planning a bit of mischief to make it an exciting day. I know the identical twins had a disturbing trick that they could play on me that lasted all year long. They looked and dressed exactly alike. They could change seats and I found it difficult to tell one from the other.

One cannot be in the Berkshires in the fall without being inspired by the surrounding beauty. One feels that when nature produces such beautiful surroundings to work in, one must put forth his or her best work to be in tune.

Winter follows and, in the country, people seem to be more aware of the beauty, and of winter sports than in the city where the emphasis has to be on the inconvenience of the snow. Our social life that winter consisted of Church, Grange, and occasional parties in the Community House.

Spring in the Berkshires is spring at its best. When the days start to get longer, one starts to look forward to that wonderful season. The first of spring is not a calendar day but comes when the days begin to get warmer and the sap begins running in the sugar maple trees. At the end of the sugaring-off season the trees start budding, the birds return, and little



*Grace's school children in Cummington, Mass.*

new animals arrive on the farms. Then there is the fishing season.

One day I went home for lunch as usual. When I returned there was some mischief astir in my room, but I couldn't determine just what it was. Then I discovered undue interest in the ink wells. They had been emptied, washed and filled, each with water and a polliwog! Returning them to the Nature Table and the polliwog bowl wasn't as much fun as the reverse procedure had been. From then on the polliwogs lived a happy but unadventurous life until they started to develop legs and were returned to their natural abode.

Then came the marble season. I don't think more enthusiasm could have been enjoyed than the marble contests that year. They were dropping from desks like hail stones and rolling hither and thither. In my dilemma I made individual marble bags with initials on each one to solve

the marble problem. Looking back, I am glad I had that problem to solve for the unanimous appreciation and the unexpected personal little gift I still recall with pleasure. So often we expect children to be grateful for the big sacrifices we make for them, and these are beyond their comprehension. It is the little unexpected thought that means so much.

Summer quickly followed spring. The primary grade teachers had trod along the same path another year, giving new adventures in the field of education and giving an inspiring start to little children on their long journey ahead. We younger teachers were eager for new paths that would lead to greater challenges and remuneration, and so our search began. For that reason we parted in June, perhaps never to meet again, but with us went very permanent memories of our first year of teaching in Cummington.

# About Our Contributors

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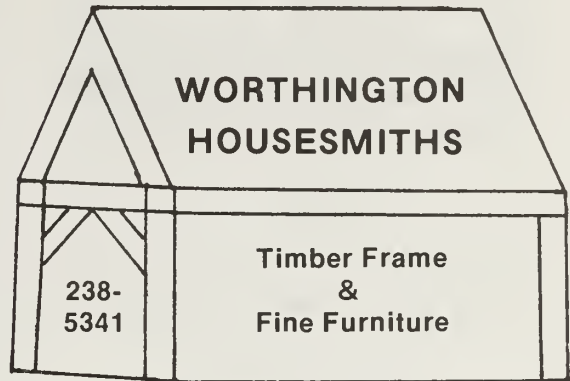
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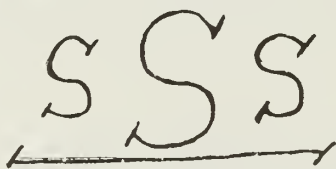
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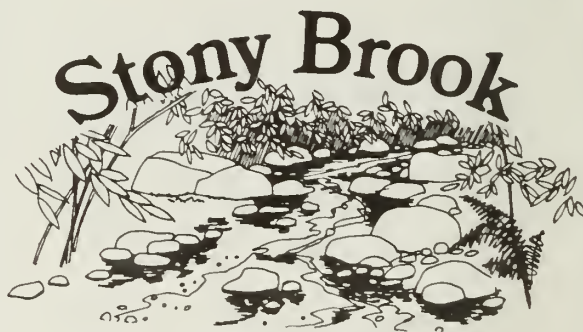
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